

LINSY SISEMORE 1940 FORT KLAMATH, OREGON 575
"MEMORIES OF A PIONEER BOYHOOD"
of Fort Klamath Mar. 30, 1940

I have been for the last couple of years making notes of things I remember of my early life and events as I remember them. It is a long trail to try hard back over. Naturally this will be a record of events as they come to my mind. After starting this, rambling record I began seriously think at 70 we are prone to exaggerate - on events, not intentionally of course but it seems we just do. one does not notice it in himself, of course - as he does in others whom he has known since boyhood. so I shall not over draw on things but record them - as I know they were.

My parents, John Sismore and Mary Sismore, (Formerly Mrs Enoch Pelton whose maiden name was Mary Roe, each crossed the plains by ox team. Mother in 1852, father's date I do not know definitely from what is told of his life in the west I conclude it was about the same date.

Father was born in Kentucky
Mother in Missouri;

Father came the southern route into California, Mother by the north-
ern down the Columbia River. I know but little of father's life up to 1858 when he came to Oregon. Father was born 1835. Mother 1837.

Father died 1910, Mother 1902
 Father was an orphan at 12 years and spent some of early life on a horse ranch, became a jockey and rode until he became too heavy. He was, at maturity 6'4 and weighed around 220# dark complexioned. He never attended school a day but had a good mind and was very apt in figures mentally. In fact he had a lot of common sense and was very gentlemanly. He enjoyed most of any sport horse racing. He too was a poker player - as was most of the California miners where he spent several years. When he came to Oregon he soon joined Pettin, mother's first husband who died early in the 60's, in land and timber business. They located in Sam's Valley a part of Jackson Co. The valley in which they located was named for Captain Sam captor of the Rogue Indians, a tribe now extinct.

I do not know when the Poes came to southern Oregon. I have heard mother speak of having worked for the Ish family who had a large ranch near Jacksonville by her marriage to Pettin she had 3 sons Horace, James & John. John was the youngest and was 9 years older than me. The partnership continued on S. Prainmont Pettin until 1885
 The census grants spoke of the year 1852

-as the year the ^{low} colery was bad. My grand mother and one of her ~~first~~ daughters were buried at the road side near the Dalls. Mather never ^{knew} just where. They were out of food when they reached the Columbia. Relief came from Oregon City but charged \$1⁰⁰ per pound for flour and many of them gave their last for food. They went by draft down to the mouth of the Willamette River Truly pioneering the west.

My first recollection to 1875 when father had a new home built. It was a large 2 story 9 room place which burned down in 1882. It was a long job building it as the lumber had to be hand dressed. That was the first frame house I can remember - of being in. Our old home was a 1 1/2 story frame log of rooms.

I remember very well our first year in the new home we were visited by D. S. K. Buick, who was a grange organizer. He gave my first led pencil and cautioned me not to mark on the new house. I don't remember of ever having had any money up to that time.

About 1/4 mile from the new home was a school house where I attended my first school. The teacher was a tall slender Irishman with a long red beard. His name was Brogan and was I scared of him? Our first task

was to learn to say the alphabet forward and backward. As I remember now I had them about learned when our 3 months was finished. That was all the school we had in a year except when we hoped to have enough ^{money} for a spring term which was not often. There were no grades in school at that time, one teacher would have as many as 60 pupils ranging from the first to the fifth reader.

You can imagine the work a teacher had to do. Some of the older pupils had as high as 5 studies. The teacher's wage - as long as I attended school was \$33 $\frac{1}{3}$ per month. Many of our teachers were young girls whose education would about compare to an 8th grade pupil of today. The teacher boarded with the pupils, time with a family depended on the number of pupils in the family.

On the ranches Pettor and Father had acquired, there ^{were} some orchards, new settlers would buy apples, I remember seeing father sell two wagon boxes full, one wagon load he sold for \$1.50 as they were picked from the trees, the other load he sold for .56 cts - as those were picked off of the ground. This illustrates the market condition with us at that time. It was all local and no one had any money to speak of, wheat was hauled to the mill and ground, miller kept part of the flour

as his pay we would then dust out the wheat
 2 acres, felt them with flour haul it home
 later trade it ^{to} the merchants for what
 we had to buy, or sell it along with
 bacon and lard to miners. One of our
 best markets was Kerby, now a small
 village - out from Grants Pass.

In 1871 father bought "The Salt Works".
 There was a small satten spring about
 20 miles from Jacksonville. The water
 was run down from the hillside into 60
 gallon iron kettles which were on a crude
 rock furnace. When the kettles were full
 a fire was lighted in the furnace. The
 water evaporated leaving the salt
 which was sold. I have wished since
 I had asked how much salt he got from
 60 gallons of water.

I forgot to mention our school teachers
 received \$100. for three months $33\frac{1}{3}$
 per month.

When I was a boy the feeling was
 pretty strong between northern and
 southern people my people being
 southerners were a little leary of a
 "Yank" and as I remember then the
 northerners were a little better traders
 than southerners.

Harvest was a big job most of the
 ranches had a reaper, a machine
 which cut very much like a mowers
 except it had a reel which struck
 the grain as it came in contact

with the sickle causing it to fall on a platform where it was carried a few feet, then platform was dumped leaving the grain in a bunch. That was followed by men who took a "wisp" a hand full of the grain and bounced the bunch, stood at one end and rush on to the next dump. Threshing was done by horse power 8 or 12 spans of horses were hitched to long sweeps and went around and around turning a big cog wheel which turned a small pinion on the end of the "tumbling rod" which operated the separator. All the men boarded at the farm home. It took a pretty good sized crop to feed the men and horses.

In 1869 father took a drove of hogs and a pack train from Jackson Co to the mines in Idaho that being the year I was born I only remember his telling me of it. I do not know what the distance was nor how long he was on the road. It was probably 500 miles and at the rate a hog travels it sure was no small job. Then to ride a mule on the return trip it must have been a six months trip.

One of the conveniences we had that you will never know was a fly trap. It was a fly trap. Easily made and very effective. Two 12" boards 4 ft long hanging from the kitchen ceiling about 1 inch apart the inner sides smeared with sargin syrup.

in passing one would slip the board together, you would be surprised how many you would kill. To make it more effective one of us children would stand by the table while the threshing crew, usually 12 or 14 men were eating with a stick four or five feet long over which had been folded old news paper, then slit into strips 6 or 8 inches long, as we would wave that over the table it would keep the flies off of the food and drive them to the trap.

One of the interesting sights of my young life was the first coal oil lamp to come into Sun's Valley. Mr. Gairard, a "yankie" got one and while it was interesting to see were surprised to think one would install in his home a thing so dangerous. It sure was an improvement over our "stout" lamp a saucer of lard with a cotton string braided tightly in the lard and one end of the string over the edge for a wick.

As there were no grades in school and so many classes, if one had to stay out of school on account of sickness or to help with the ranch work and lost too much time he would at beginning of next term, start in at the first of his reader with the new pupils in that reader. I think I must have climbed the second reader ladder a number of times before a got to the top and got into the third.

The Chirren, of whom there were a great many mining along the streams

afforded quite a market for pork, chickens, flour etc. They worked in camps of various sizes sometimes as many as 4 or 50 in a camp. They as I remember them very dependable, & generous.

One of the important events of the year was camp meeting and as my parents were Methodist use of course missed but few. People would come by wagon for miles around with the wagon loaded with a camp outfit and children and as people had hunting hounds there was naturally a goodly number of dogs in camp. The camp was usually on a stream where they could embrace the converts. We boys who could successfully sneak away from stepping through a sermon would very solemnly convert and baptize dogs.

Our home was 20 miles from Jacksonville, the county seat of the county. One of the eventful trips of my life was helping father drive a bunch of fat cattle to Jacksonville. The sheriff had a large ranch near town and father paid his taxes with cattle. While in town, among other things he bought a broom and as it was a new one I felt very proud riding home 20 miles with a new broom on my shoulder. The strange part to you no doubt is how we elderly people remember these little events. The main reason is,

thinks ^{is} that events ^{such} as I speak of were, to us as great an event to us - as a new type of automobile - or as a new war breaking out in Europe is to you.

The first industrial plant I ever saw was "daddy" Hannas pottery plant. it was an open shed under which was a corter hopper, round about, as I remember it 6 ft in diameter and 4 ft high. in the center was a post on the post was a sweep - or pole - one end extending over - over to about $\frac{1}{2}$ the space from post to side of tank the other end extending over to a few feet past the side of the tank. I say tank - it was wooden but made of punchins. A punchin is a thick plank split out of a log. on the short end of the sweep was a chain, attached the chain was a heavy rock - on the other end he would hitch a mule near our home, which was 12 or 14 miles from Hannas, there was a clay bank - on Burns Creek. The old man would come down and dig out a wagon box of clay, haul it home shove a part of it into the hopper. He was then ready to start operation. He would dampen the clay, hitch Ajax, the old mule to the long end of the sweep, turn on the power, not by throwing an electric switch but by throwing a rock at Ajax and the plant was in operation. Around and around the mule would go dragging the rock in the dampened clay thus kneading it. After thoroughly stirring

if he would take out a chunk of the size depended on size of the vessel he wanted to make place it on a short board which would round - as he tread with foot to turn it. he would, with his hand shape it into vessels for house hold use. It was surprising to see the number of different things he shaped out. Flower vases, water pichers, milk pans - as we called them - as we had no milk seperators would have to set the milk for the cream to rise. He would shape a lid for the vessel that sat under the beds.

as soon as the clay dried and hardened he placed the vessels in crud stone oven and baked them to a dark brown color. It depended - on the size as to cost, but as I remember the average price was 25 cts each.

We felt we were advancing when we got our first plow with riding attachment. 2 1/2 acres per day was a good days plowing with a walking plow. 3 horses were used on a 14" plow. 2 on a 12" plow. We put on no tap dance in the evening after plowing 2 1/2 acres. While resting my team one day I figured out on my boat top a man to plow 2 1/2 acres would have to walk 17 1/2 miles. Still we had some time to do 17 1/2 miles. He fed, brush the horses and harnessed them before breakfast by lantern light. Our regular time of rising in the morning was 5 o'clock.

after breakfast, as one of the ranches was a mile and a half from the home, reach the field little after sunrise. We carried our lunch and grain for the horses. He usually left the field at sunset. Boy did have a lot of disappointments in the spring, a spring shower would come up, and it seemed to me the shower usually started where I was, at the ^{top} long end of the field, by the time I got to turning but place the rain would stop and I would have to continue on. With horse drawn implements one would cover about 2 acres to the foot cut of the machine. 20 acres with a 10 ft harrow, Mower, Header etc Harrowing was usually the boy job as he had no handling of the heavy implement all he had to do was cover 20 acres at rate of 10 ft width of the harrow. Of course the fresh plow ground did not hurt his bare feet, Nor did the soft loose ground - and any to the ease with which he could walk. At 10 ft we came in stabled and fed hay to the horses, went to the house had supper then got our lanterns and back to the barn. Fed grain carried the sweat off the horses, bed them with straw.

He were then ready for bed. Our beds were mostly straw ticks filled out straw as it was the softest straw we had. Each year after harvest the ticks were filled with fresh straw.

The first wagon I remember of was a linch ~~pin~~ pin. Deriving its name from the pins which held the wheels on the spindles. They were wooden axle with metal spindle ^{iron} a pin 4 or 5 in long, about $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick and 1" wide placed through the outer end kept the wheel on. As lard was plentiful and cheap it was used to grease wagons a lot. Mixing lard and flower gave body to the grease and it would stay on longer.

We milled our wheat at Eagle Point, would cross Rogue River on way to mill on Rybees ferry; on way back would ford with no load. At times during running season of Salmon the fish would be so thick on the riffles where the ford was it difficult to get horses to cross.

Grooved cut saws were very rare. I would chop down large oak trees and chop the limbs off for wood, leaving the body.

When the first round or wire nails came on the market, some thought they would not be popular. People would waste time straightening bent nails. With the kind we had, square and were called cut nails, made out of rather soft cast iron and would not stand straightening if bent.

My first ambition was to be an overland stage driver. They were always well dressed, white shirt and I suppose, a white celluloid collar,

which was most common. The stages had 4 or 6 horses owing to locality some roads were much worse than others. The distance between changes of horses was around 12 miles, as that is about as far as a horse can stand to go where is going every day. The driver would arrive at a station pass the lines to the man in charge who would ~~take~~ unhook the horses turn them in the lot and bring out a fresh team ready harnessed. The driver drove the same road each day. up and back at night they had lanterns about ~~the~~ 8 inches square on each side of the stage. Using very large candles. Most of the roads were not graded up nor gravelled and at times the mud would knee deep to a horse.

My first trip to Portland was the winter of 1884. 3 of us swell guys visited the Mechanics Exposition. He started with \$20⁰⁰ each our round trip cost was \$6⁰⁰ we stay a week and I got home with \$1⁰⁰ arrived at Gold Hill at night and walk 6 miles home that night. He sure had seen a lot of the world. Every runner for a hotel that showed us any favor we moved to his hotel. It was no trouble to move since we had no baggage and not much room rent to pay. The 3 slept in one bed. Every rancher was his own veterinarian

If a cow was sick she either had the holler horn or had lost her cud, the thing to do was to make her one roll up some bacon rine in a salted dish rag made a fine one force it down her throat. The theory was she had to swallow one to force another one up.

If she had holler horn the remedy was to slit the skin of her tail just above the bush and put salt and pepper in the slit and wrap a cloth around it. Naturally she, if not too sick would get up and move right off. If she died the conclusion was she was not treated soon enough if she ^{were} got, I knew it would cure her.

Sheep manure tea was a very good remedy for youngsters with measles.

The first bridge on Rogue River in Jackson Co was where the RR bridge is at Gals Hill, it was a toll bridge 25¢ for a single crossing or 7⁰⁰ a year for some Valley ranches.

After hog butchering in the fall came soap making. All of the hard wood ashes were saved and placed in an ash-hopper built very much like a feed rack except not large and the slats were shakes placed tight together so when water was poured on the ashes it would soak through and follow the shakes into a trough and empty in a vessel. If soaked through one ashes it would come out strong lye, about the color of good coffee.

It would then be emptied into an iron kettle and bacon rind trimmings and any other fat, tallow or lard and boiled and stirred. After the lye would "eat" the fat until it would become, when cooled soap, it was quite an accomplishment to make the soap white and solid.

When I hear a radio sometimes think of when we first heard of the woor theory of sound. Rev. J. R. N. Bell, for whom the Bell Athletic field at Corvillis, was named told us of a Dr. Hall a scientist and writer in New York, it seems to me it was about 1880. although young, it impressed me and I afterwards read just a little of his writing. One small magazine I remember called The Microcosm. It seems strange one at my age can remember things, events, places, names etc. - better than we can of happenings of yesterday.